

*" collapse of Capitalism " and, later, of an imminent inter-national catastrophe such as might sweep modern civilisation as completely away as ever the barbarian hordes did that of Rome, he saw something worse Not any visible dramatic event, but a slow bleeding to death was how he diagnosed the situation, in 1932

To any democratic faith, these years represented a time of severe and cumulative strain Democracy was, outside Great Britain, being challenged in action, as well as undermined in thought The second Russian Revolution of 1917 installed one Dictatorship, 1922 saw another established in Fascist Italy The stability of systems based on the denial of liberty spread corrosive doubts office institutions, in ever-widening circles Republican and semi-Socialist Germany, with superhuman efforts, pulled itself up out of the trough of defeat and blockade, and enjoyed a brief spell of apparent recovery with the cessation of the Ruhr occupation, only to be plunged again into clespan through the pressure of Reparations and Veisailles controls, and compelled to turn, desperately, to ideas of force which had, by its best minds, been abandoned In the United States, stronghold of Capitalism, a bland conviction that all was well maintained itself up to the opening of 1930, only to be swept out of recollection by the impact of the delayed economic slump Depression then made Americans arch disseminators of doubts about democratic institutions.

Such was the international and the economic back-

ground of nine years of close personal concern
with political
responsibility and close contact with
representative demo-
cracy, unwillingly undertaken by an actor who
gravely
doubted his own competence in the role True,
he defended
the House of Commons against the common
charges of
having "degenerated" and of now failing to
command the
public interest and respect it had once enjoyed
Those who
made these charges, he said in 1928, in an
interview with the